Summary of DOER proposed Stretch and Specialized code amendments – February 2026

Proposed code changes (Commercial chapters)

Summary of Code change	What problem is it addressing; who identified problem	Relevant code sections
Modifying the District Energy Systems section to allow mixed-fuel systems to avoid investing in pre-wiring in buildings connecting to a steam network transitioning away from fossil fuels. This change provides a pathway for these systems to invest in heat pumps and to phase out fossil fuels, by lowering the cost of retrofitting buildings on the added to the system.	Electrification and electrification readiness is duplicative for buildings connecting to steam networks that are transitioning from fossil fuel fired to electric heat pumps. *Identified by Boston Green Ribbon Commission Higher Education Working Group and Vicinity Energy*	**C202 - Definitions:** **"**Decarbonization and Efficient Electrification Plan"; "District Energy System Order of Conditions" **C407.2.1 -** Electrification and Documentation for Highly Ventilated Buildings
Modifying the air leakage testing requirements for renovations and additions. Adds flexibility so that air leakage testing can be practically implemented in situations where isolating space is not feasible.	In 2021 the IECC model code began to mandate the same air leakage testing required for new construction in renovations and additions. However, isolating space for testing (readily done for new construction) is often not feasible in existing buildings. *Identified by various architects, air leakage experts, and SE-TAC*	**Section C402.5.2** – Air Leakage
Adding more insulation material choices to the optional "drop down" embodied carbon credit list.	Some commonly used insulation types (notably zip-sheathing) were not included in the optional embodied carbon "drop down" list. Adding to the list will save time versus having to manually enter data from EPDs.	**Table C406.15** – Default Insulation Global Warming Potential Values

	Identified by multiple HERS raters and an architecture firm looking to utilize the credit	
Adding a new row for small commercial buildings (under 40,000 sf) in the C407 TEDI table.	Allows more flexibility for small, unusual commercial buildings following the TEDI compliance pathway. *Identified by design team in development of a special needs school*	**Table C407.1.1.5** Thermal Energy Demand Intensity (TEDI) Limits All buildings < 40,000-sf
Modifying the pre-wiring requirements for future electrification to allow much more flexibility to show compliance with electric readiness. Allows design teams to deviate from prescriptive requirements.	Electric readiness provisions are largely prescriptive. These can be difficult to adhere to, particularly for commercial water heating. *Identified by various architects and SE-TAC*	**Section CC106.1.5** – Other Combustion Equipment **Section CC106.1.5** – Other Combustion Equipment – Highly Ventilated Buildings

Errata and Process Corrections (Commercial chapters)

Summary of Code Errata / correction	Who flagged the Errata	Relevant code sections
Adding a 6-month concurrency period for these changes to be incorporated by building inspectors, providing flexibility to apply either the preceding (Feb 2025) code or these updates for a 6-month period following the publication in the state register	Building official organizations led by MFBO (MA Federation of Building Officials) and real estate stakeholders led by NAIOP have requested a transition period as changes take effect in the code, to allow more time to make adjustments in project planning and review.	**C101.2.1** – Concurrency Period
Clarifying all-electric and mixed fuel buildings; clarifying exceptions for back-up power generators and vehicle refueling and outdoor equipment refueling.	Various code users have requested clarifications on the specific requirements for all-electric vs mixed-fuel buildings. The requests are almost always for residential projects, but there are inconsistencies between the existing text in residential vs commercial code.	**C202** – Definitions, "All-Electric Building", "Mixed Fuel Building" **CC101.3** - Compliance

Revision to "Conditioned Space" definition. The new definition is the most lenient option by setting the interior face of the finished wall as the point of the measurement. This update aligns with the revised residential definition.	There have been numerous queries about which method should be used to calculate the conditioned space for a building.	**C202** – Definitions, "Conditioned Space"
Updated references	Various architects and engineers have alerted the DOER to mis-linked references in the codes.	**C402.5.2.2** - Dwelling and sleeping unit enclosure test method and reporting. **Tables C406.1(1) through Table C406.1(5) -** Additional EE Credits **Section CC104.1** – General
Corrects title names to match Passive House Institute (PHI) convention	Various architects	**C407.3.2.2** - Passive House Institute Documentation. **C506.2** - Documentation
Removes "Change of Use" from title column in HERs threshold table because there is no HERs option for change of use scenario.	Various architects	**Table C407.4 –** Maximum Energy Rating Index
Removes table that used to be required to articulate calendar phase-in of Passive House, which is no longer required.	DOER initiated	**CC101.2** - Scope

Proposed code changes (Residential chapters)

Summary of Code change	What problem is it addressing; who identified problem	Relevant code sections
Adds a definition for Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) to align with the definition used in EOHLC's ADU regulations and provide clarity within the code document.	In the February 2025 code update new ADUs were provided with a more lenient HERS Rating than larger new homes, but the definition of ADU was deferred to the recent EOHLC regulations. MFBO (MA Federation of Building Officials) and multiple local officials requested including a definition in the code documents directly for clarity.	**R202** (Definitions)
Adds clarification to "All-electric building", "Mixed-fuel building" and adds "Biomass", "Fuel gas", "Fuel oil" and "Dwelling" definitions, to address wood and other solid fuel that is not fossil, and to more explicitly allow back-up generators for residential homes.	The MFBO and multiple building officials, notably Wellesley ISD, have requested a more explicit definition of 'all-electric' and a clear exception to clarify that on-site back-up generators are allowed in residential use (to align with the commercial code).	**R202** (Definitions)
Revision to "Conditioned Space" definition. The new definition is the most lenient option by setting the interior face of the finished wall as the point of the measurement.	With size thresholds triggering changes in code requirements for larger homes or additions, requests to clarify how the conditioned space area should be calculated have been frequent. Gross square footage is commonly used in real estate, but doesn't fully align with conditioned space measurements.	**R202** (Definitions)
Adds "Tiny Home" definition & inclusion of Tiny Home in the HERS Index at the same level as ADUs, for both Stretch code and Specialized code.	"Tiny Homes" was added to the 780 CMR after the last updates to the Stretch & Specialized codes in February 2025. The DOER has since received multiple queries about whether Tiny Homes could receive the same beneficial HERs treatment as ADUs.	**R202** (Definitions) **Table R406.5** (HERS) **Table RC102.2,** (Specialized code) **Table RC103.2,** **Table RC104.2**
Townhouse developments with 6 or more units would be granted the same compliance option as R-2 multi-family buildings – which	Conversations with at least two separate developers of town-house and small multi-family sub-divisions persuaded DOER to align the EV ready parking for	**R404.4** (EV ready wiring) **Table R404.4**

enables the use of the commercial energy code for EV ready parking along with its lower EV Ready space requirements.	townhomes to match multi-family rather than single-family. It also alerted DOER to the issue of the public right-of-way language as it was causing confusion -- Exception #2 was misconstrued to apply to spaces separated from townhouses by a sidewalk in a development, when it's origin (from National Grid) relates to avoiding developers from acting as a utility.	
Adds more insulation material choices when using the optional embodied carbon credit, saving time versus having to manually enter data from EPDs. This change also removes HFC spray foam since HFC use in MA is prohibited (HFO spray foam is used instead).	Multiple HERS raters, and at least one architecture firm, noticed that types of insulation commonly used in Massachusetts were missing from the Embodied Carbon Insulation table.	**Table R406.5.3** (Default Insulation Global Warming Potential Values)
2 clarifications are proposed: **Item #1** is updated to clarify that the threshold for triggering this Section is "meets or exceeds 100%". **Item #3** is added to clarify what happens on a project that is undergoing both an addition of new space AND an alteration of the existing. This new segment of code determines that, if on a single project, the alteration exceeds 1,000 sq ft AND an addition exceeds 600 sq ft, then the project will require a HERS rating on the existing plus addition.	Some building officials took issue with the suggestion that a project can exceed 100% of its existing space. Multiple building officials requested clarity on the trigger for hybrid addition plus alteration projects. There has been confusion about the threshold for which a project including both an alteration and an addition would trigger HERs when both the addition and alteration are not significant enough on their own to trigger HERs but the combined space is larger than the HERS threshold for either one or both.	**R503.1.5** (Extensive Alterations and Additions)
Re-phrasing to clarify code language on Change of Use or Occupancy to make it less	Multiple building officials and architecture firms frequently seek clarity on 'Change of Use' projects:	**R505.1** (Change of use or occupancy)

vague and difficult to understand. The proposed language lists the exact sections of code that a Change of Use project needs to follow.	what constitutes Change of Use and what is required for Change of Use.	

Errata and Process Corrections

Summary of Code Errata / correction	Who flagged the Errata	Relevant code sections
Adding a 6-month concurrency period for these changes to be incorporated by building inspectors, providing flexibility to apply either the preceding (Feb 2025) code or these updates for a 6-month period following the publication in the state register.	Both building official organizations led by MFBO, and real estate stakeholders led by NAIOP have requested a concurrency period to allow more time to make adjustments in project planning and review.	**R101.2.1** (Concurrency Period (Same as Commercial C101.2.1))
Revising the Additional Energy Efficiency language for clarity.	Two separate architects submitted questions seeking clarification of how to read this language, as the existing sentence after the section title is redundant and causes confusion to some code users.	**R401.2.5** (Additional energy efficiency)
Officially adding R-30 as an allowed (all cavity) wall R-value option for wood framed walls.	Various code users noted that R-30 is missing from the version of the Stretch & Specialized code on the Sec of State site. It was accidently omitted in the Feb 2025 updates.	**Table R402.1.3** (Insulation minimum R-values)
Updated reference to REScheck, MA Stretch code option from 2023 to 2025	Flagged by DOER staff, and multiple building officials.	**R402.1.5.1** (Approved software for Total UA alternative)
Corrections to Passive house documentation--- the updated title “Certified Passive House Consultant or Certified Passive House Designer” is in-keeping with the PHI standards.	A Certified Passive House Consultant and several SE-TAC members noted that the incorrect title for a PHI-accredited certifier is used in the code.	**R405.2.2,** (Passive house Institute (PHI) documentation)

The incorrect reference to the commercial section C403 is replaced with the correct R403.		**R506.2** (EnerPHit documentation) **R405.3.2.d.ii**
Removal of "Change of Use" from HERS requirements for "major alterations and additions" column for the HERS rating table. This is errata rather than a code change, in keeping with how Change of Use is treated in commercial code. An important example would be the change of use from a two-story mill building into a two-story apartment building.	Continued confusion around Change of Use projects raised the issue of its inclusion on the HERs table. Change of Use should not require a HERs rating, in order to incentivize the creation of residential space from other uses.	**Table R406.5,** (HERS compliance) **R502.1.1,** **R503.1.5**
Clarifying footnote "d" to address ADUs in HERS table, reinforcing that the energy codes do not care how the ADU relates to the primary residence (i.e., detached from primary residence, attached to primary residence, in the basement of the primary residence, etc.). ADUs follow the same column in the HERs table regardless of their relationship to the primary dwelling.	Multiple stakeholder questions to the Stretchcode@mass.gov inbox continue to be confused about how to treat an ADU, since they used to be loosely treated as an addition/alteration.	**Table R406.5** (HERS compliance)
Minor grammatical changes to the Insulation embodied carbon credit: removal of the words "average" and "intensity" from the required demonstration of calculated insulation GWP. Adds reference to embodied carbon calculator's inclusion as "Attachment E" in the Technical Guidance document along with the removal of a sentence describing the output metric for the embodied carbon calculation, as this is now described in the Attachment E.	DOER Staff edits to clarify the intention and expectation of this optional section.	**R406.5.2** (Embodied carbon credit) **R406.5.3** (Documentation)